

Connections and Engagement Frequently Asked Questions

Q What do you mean by connections and engagement?

A When we use the word “connections” we mean our relationships with others and the strength of those relationships. “Engagement” means our commitment to community and the willingness to take actions to solve problems or participate in activities that make our community better.

Connections and engagement are two sides of the same coin. It is only through strong relationships that we can care enough to work together to make our community a better place for everyone.

Q What was the 2012 Metro Vancouver Survey on Connections and Engagement designed to measure?

A We wanted to measure connections and engagement on three levels.

First, we explored the most intimate level of connection - people’s personal friendships. Then we asked about their connections to their neighbours and neighbourhood. Lastly, we investigated people’s relationship with and attitudes toward the larger community of metro Vancouver.

We also asked about residents’ participation in various aspects of community life, and explored what prevents them from being more connected and engaged.

Q Why did you feel you needed to do a survey?

A Before we can invest in building a more connected and engaged community, we need to know our starting point.

Part of our goal for this survey was to measure how residents are experiencing life in metro Vancouver right now. Of even more value to our foundation is an understanding of how we can strengthen our community.

We are particularly interested in identifying the gaps; the areas where we can help improve people’s lives, and help people connect and engage for the greater good of everyone in the community.



Q What did you find out?

A We found that metro Vancouver can be a hard place to make friends and that one in four people are alone more often than they would like to be.

We found that our neighbourhood relationships are cordial but weak. Many of us know at least a few of our neighbours' first names but our connections typically stop there. Most of us do not do small favours for each other like looking after the mail when a neighbour is away or visit in each other's homes.

We found that many people are retreating from community life, and that it isn't a lack of time that prevents them from participating, it's a feeling they have little to offer.

We found that there are limits to how people see diversity as an opportunity to forge meaningful connections. Over one-third of us have no close friends outside our own ethnic group. And we generally believe that people prefer to be with others of the same ethnicity.

And we found that certain groups of people are struggling more than others to feel connected and engaged.

Q How complete is the report you released on June 18, 2012?

A This report is a high-level overview of the findings. Over the next few months we will delve deeper into the data to better understand how specific groups of residents are experiencing life in our region. We will release additional reports throughout the summer.

Q Who participated in the survey?

A In total, we surveyed 3,841 people across metro Vancouver. The research firm, Sentis Market Research, used a mixed mode method for gathering the data: 2,806 online surveys and 1,035 telephone interviews were collected in April and May, 2012.

Q What languages did you survey people in?

A Most interviews took place in English, but when necessary, interviews were also conducted in Cantonese, Mandarin or Punjabi.



Q Why did Vancouver Foundation choose “building connections and engagement” as a priority?

A This comes from a public consultation we did in the summer of 2011. We spoke to 106 community leaders in metro Vancouver from a wide range of backgrounds and interests. We also did an online survey with 276 non-profits. We asked people what community issue concerned them the most and where they thought the Foundation should focus our ideas, energies and some resources to have a greater impact in the community.

Q What exactly did people say?

A The issue people said concerned them the most was growing isolation and disconnection; the feeling that we increasingly live in silos, separated by ethnicity, culture, language, income, age, and even geography. The impact, people said, is growing isolation, a retreat into ethnic enclaves, and increasing civic malaise and indifference.

The people we consulted felt the best investment Vancouver Foundation could make would be to help create bridges between our various communities – between neighbours and neighbourhoods; between residents of different ages, cultures and backgrounds; between marginalized people and the larger community – with the goal of helping residents of metro Vancouver connect and engage for the greater good.

Q Why does this matter?

A Research shows significant benefits when people feel connected to others and engaged in the life of the community. Just knowing your neighbour’s name means the entire neighbourhood is safer. There is less crime, people are healthier, babies thrive, there is less depression and suicide, fewer teenage pregnancies, children do better in school, and people bounce back more quickly from setbacks such as illness, job loss or divorce.

Simply joining a club reduces your chances of death by 50% in the first year. It is as good for your health as quitting smoking.

We are simply better off in many of the ways that matter.

These benefits aid the entire community. When people know and trust one another, it creates shared values and vision, making it easier to tackle the big issues such as homelessness, poverty, climate change . . .



Q What will you do with the data from the survey?

A We will use the results of this survey to focus on how we can help build bridges between our various communities – between neighbours and neighbourhoods; between residents of different ages, cultures and backgrounds; between marginalized people and the larger community – with the goal of helping residents of metro Vancouver connect and engage for the greater good.

We cannot do this work alone. We will also consider what initiatives we can work on with our community partners to enhance our residents' experience of being part of a larger community. And we will engage the public in a conversation about solutions.

We will also be expanding our Neighbourhood Small Grants Program. NSG helps residents connect and engage in their community by encouraging them to come up with ideas that strengthen their neighbourhoods.



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